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TAGS: [ECON](#) [IZ](#) [PGOV](#)
SUBJECT: IRAQ EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE - FEB 22

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Prime Minister Maliki and Deputy Prime Minister Salih co-chaired the Iraqi Executive Steering Committee (I-ESC) in support of the Baghdad Security Plan (FaQ). The meeting featured PM Maliki calling for the reestablishment of defunct neighborhood councils in Sunni areas; the decision to pay-off and forcibly evict 120 squatter families from 2 Ministry of Defense buildings in central Baghdad; and complaints over the Governor's refusal to share information about Baghdad's network of security cameras. END SUMMARY

Defunct Neighborhood Councils in Sunni Areas

¶2. (C) In response to a Project Clean Delivery briefing about difficulties in delivering kerosene to Sunni areas of Baghdad that have defunct local government councils due to previous assassinations and threats from AQI, PM Maliki urged that the Provincial Council and Baghdad Governor work with Interim Follow-up Committee on National Reconciliation. (Comment. At the follow-up Deputy Meeting, the I-ESC Secretariat stated that new council was to be temporary until Iraq elections are held NLT 1 October, 2008. End Comment).

¶3. (C) Comment. PM Maliki also mentioned utilizing the involvement of the Popular Mobilization Committees. Since Chalabi had assumed his position as Head of the Essential Services Committee, the Embassy had assumed that his Popular Mobilization Committee was no longer active. Over the course of the last year, the Embassy has sought to limit interaction with Chalabi's Popular Mobilization Committee, viewing it as

an illegitimate competitor to Neighborhood Councils. End Comment.

Squatter Gangs in MoD Housing Complexes

¶4. (C) The Minister of Defense and the Baghdad Operations Commander both identified gangs of squatters living amongst 60 families in each of the MoD owned Bab Al-Mouzan Housing Complex in Southern Adamiyah and the Air Force Club in Karrada as extremely destabilizing for security in central Baghdad. Dr. Chalabi noted that these gangs are menacing local universities. DPM Salih stated that the families should both be forced to leave and given financial payments as compensation. Several IESC members voiced concerns that this would be seen as rewarding law breakers. The issue was to be followed-up on at the MCNS.

Future of Green Zone Proposals

¶5. (C) As part of a discussion updating the progress of refurbish GoI owned buildings in Baghdad, the Secretary of the Council of Ministers (CoM) noted that CoM would soon be reviewing proposals to either eventually turn the Green Zone (IZ) into a diplomatic area or a centralized area for GoI

entities. The Secretary noted that he was in regular contact with Multi-National Forces real estate division on the issue.

Governor Refuses to Share Information

¶16. (C) DPM Salih and National Security Advisor Dr. Rubaie voiced frustration to the Baghdad Governor over his refusal to provide any details about the number or locations of Baghdad's network of security cameras. The Governor defended his refusal by noting that such info was highly sensitive and that some of the cameras are decoys. The Deputy Prime Minister instructed the Governor to prepare a detailed report to be delivered to Dr. Rubaie and the Council of Ministers. (Comment. The Governor often feels unfairly usurped regarding control of security forces in Baghdad. The Baghdad Operations Command was created under an emergency executive order and reports directly to the Prime Minister. The Embassy was previously informed that there are approximately 1000 security cameras in Baghdad, including decoys. End Comment.)

¶17. (C) The Baghdad Governor agreed to proceed with the establishment of video viewing screens for the cameras at the Prime Minister's National Operation Center. The Governor also complained that he is short of skilled computer technicians to run the camera network and asked for assistance in hiring 17 such specialists.

PDS Quality Poor, Distribution System Corrupt

¶18. (C) The Minister of Trade acknowledged extensive corruption and poor food quality in the monthly distribution of basic food stuffs to Iraq's citizens. Specifically, the

Minister noted that significant quantities of spoiled food and been imported and that gangs regularly switch out quality food for poor quality food at warehouses. The Minister said that he was taking steps to improve import quality, but that he needed assistance from the BOC to curb theft and corruption. Noting the need to improve government services in previously insecure areas, DPM Salih instructed the Minister to prepare a map that indicates the degree of successful distribution in each of Baghdad's neighborhoods.

Lack of Progress on ID Smart Cards

¶19. (C) Dr. Chalabi and others lamented the fact the Ministry of Trade has yet to develop and implement an ID Smart Card that could help reduce rampant corruption. The Minister of Trade said that development of such cards had stalled due to a decision by MNF-I to withdraw \$10 million in funding. DCG Rollo stated that this funding for a Baghdad only card was withdrawn by CG Petraeus several months previously because the Ministry of Interior was attempting to establish a similar, but incompatible system nation wide. DPM Salih noted that ID Smart Cards are essential for security and instructed the NSA Office to follow up on the issue.

¶10. (C) Comment. The current PDS ID sheets are frequently and easily counterfeited. Establishment of a biometric based national ID card would have significant security benefits, but Embassy and MNF-I efforts to engage the GoI to develop such a system have bogged down due to lack of cooperation from the MoI General in charge of the program. MNF-I has developed its own data base of biometric info on tens of thousands of Iraqis through raids, detentions and Awakening engagement, but this data has not been shared with the GoI. End Comment.
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